

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A unique combination of several functions achieves a system by which consumers can validate the actual security status of a website before they decide to trust it, and therefore transact with it. In one example implementation, a security system includes a scanning engine that

5 periodically and thoroughly scans the network and connected components of an on-line service such as a website. The results are stored and perhaps reported back to the service via alerts and the like. The website includes a “bug” which visitors can click on. The visual appearance of the “bug” can be altered (e.g. made invisible) in accordance with a determined level of security for the website. By clicking on the “bug,” the visitors can also be displayed web pages showing the security status of

10 the website. Based on their review of such web pages, visitors can then decide whether to trust the website for further transactions.